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THE MUNNESVARAM TAMIL INSCRIPTION OF PARAKRAMABAHU VI

S.Pathmanathan Ph.D

Sri Munneswaram Devasthanam
Munneswaram, Chilaw.

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The Munnesvaram Tamil Inscription of Parākramabāhu VI

By

S. Pathmanathan, Ph.D.

The Tamil inscription of Parākramabāhu at the Hindu shrine of Munnesvaram records the grant of land and money by the king to that temple and its Brahmins. The inscription is of considerable academic interest as it throws some light on the history of the reign of Parākramabāhu and on Munnesvaram which is one of the principal Hindu shrines in the island. It is one of the three Tamil inscriptions of Parākramabāhu that have hitherto been brought to light,[1] and being one of the important Tamil documents of the Kotte period that have survived it cannot be ignored in any study of the development of the Tamil language and script in the island. Besides it gives some idea of the importance of Munnesvaram in the fifteenth century.

The inscription is engraved in an admixture of Tamil and Grantha characters. The text of the inscription is drafted in two languages—Tamil and Sanskrit. The main portion of the text concerning the grant is in Tamil but the initial and concluding portions are in Sanskrit. All the Sanskrit expressions and passages are written in Grantha. The epigraph begins with a conventional description of the king's descent, titles and epithets and concludes with a Sanskrit *sloka*.

The use of Sanskrit and Tamil languages in this and several other records testifies that some of the court officials were familiar with those languages. The initial portion of the record giving a description of the king slightly varies from that given in the Sinhalese inscriptions of the period. Instead of the expression *Dinakara vamsābhiyāta* the Oruvala *sannasa* contains the expression *sūryavamsōtbhūta*.[2] The Kudumirisa epigraph, however, contains the expression *sūryavamsābhijāta*.[3] Moreover, instead of the phrases *Samantabhadra Caranāravinda vandita* the phrases *Mahasammata paramparānuyāta*

1. The other two are from Naimmana and Jaffna. S. Paranavitana, *The shrine of Upulvan at Devundara, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, Vol. VI, p. 73; A. Veluppillai, 'The Naimmana inscription of Parākramabāhu', *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions* (CTI), Pt. II, Peradeniya, 1972, pp. 56–67; K. Indrapala, 'The Jaffna (Main Street) Inscription of the reign of Parākramabāhu VI.' *Epigraphia Tamilica*, (*ET*) Pt. I [Jaffna Archaeological Society, 1971] pp. 29–31.
2. H. W. Codrington, 'The Oruvala Sannasa', *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, (*EZ*), Vol. III, No. 3.
3. Mudaliyar B. Gunasekara, 'Three Sinhalese Inscriptions', *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (*JCBRAS*), X, (34), p. 98.

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occur in the Sinhalese inscriptions.[4] In drafting the texts of inscriptions the court officials of this period do not appear to have been concerned about maintaining uniformity as regards the language and form of the introductory portions of the official records.

Fowler's translation and Velupillai's edition

Fowler's translation of this epigraph was published in 1887.[5] In his introductory remarks Fowler observes:

> I have examined the Monnisvaram inscription several times and much of it is illegible. It has I think been removed from an older building and built into the present one. Several of the letters near the joints of the stones are covered by mortar which I think would not be the case if it has been cut in situ. The inscription runs along a kind of cornice and consists of four lines extending for about thirty or forty feet.[6]

Fowler frankly admits that much of the inscription was illegible to him but he gives the translation of almost the whole text. We are therefore led to imagine that he had access to a copy of a record preserved presumably in manuscript form by the temple authorities.[7]

An article on this inscription by A. Velupillai has been published recently.[8] He has used the estampage prepared by the Archaeological Department of the Government of Ceylon and in his article a photo copy of the estampage and a transliteration of the text of the inscription have been published for the first time. The letters in the last few expressions of each of the four lines of the inscription were mostly obliterated and any clear trace of them is not to be found in the estampage. The full text of the inscription cannot, therefore, be restored from a reading of the estampage.

The text of the inscription as given by Velupillai is incomplete; there are some important gaps. There are some errors in the decipherment; as will be seen later some of the expressions which are quite clear and legible on the estampage have been deciphered wrongly. Moreover, the historical significance of the inscription and its contents deserve an elaborate discussion—a sort of which has not been attempted

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4. *ibid.*, *EZ*, Vol. III, no. 3; H. W. Codrington, 'Gadaladeniya slab pillar inscriptions', *EZ*, Vol. IV, p. 24.
5. J. M. Fowler, 'Translation of an Inscription at the temple of Monnisvaram', *JRASCB*, 10 (35), 1887, pp. 118–119.
6. *ibid.*
7. Fowler is not quite correct in saying that much of the inscription is illegible. Much of it is legible. It is indeed strange that he gives the translation of the whole text although he observes that much of the text was illegible.
8. 'An inscription from the Munnesvaram Siva Temple', *CTJ*, Pt. I, pp. 37–43.

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in his paper. Moreover we now have the means of restoring even those portions of the text that have become obliterated in the stone and are therefore not portrayed in the estampage taken by the Archaeological Department.

Errors in the decipherment:

The expressions *svasti Srī samantabhadra caranāravintan āditya Vamsābhijāta*[9] as read by Velupillai have to be modified to read as *Svasti Srī Samantabhadra caranāravinda vandita Dinakaravamsābhijāta.* In the estampage there is no trace of the expression *āditya* but the letters representing *Dinakara* are quite clear. The last few expressions in the preserved portion of the first line are read by Velupillai in a curious manner as *sarama svapaṇam tā purōhi* [10] but as far as I could make out, there is no trace of any such thing and the expressions *Vijasāmagava paṇḍitar purōhita* are quite clear in the inscription. Velupillai has not deciphered them correctly. In the third line the expression *candrādityavarai* is followed by that of *sarvamānyamāka,* but instead of the latter the text as given by Velupillai contains the expression *sthrāmāka*[11] which does not make any sense. In the concluding portion of the inscription a Sanskrit verse is engraved in Grantha characters. The initial portion of the verse is very clear and reads *tadidam Gananāthasya saivañana Mahōdadheh.* This expression is, however not deciphered correctly by Velupillai.[12]

A manuscript copy of the inscription

A manuscript copy of the text of this inscription is found in the Oriental manuscripts collection of the British Museum.[13] It is bound together with a manuscript of the Tamil chronicle, the *Yāḷppāṇavaipavamālai.* No details of this manuscript copy seem to be recorded anywhere. The interesting feature about this manuscript is that it gives almost the entire text of this inscription; there are no gaps except at one instance. Any study on this inscription which ignores this manuscript could only be partial and incomplete. The manuscript contains also a paraphrase of the text which helps to interpret and translate the obscure passages in the text which are archaic in style and obscure in meaning. The paraphrase as found in the manuscript is given here in the form of an appendix.

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9. *ibid.*, p. 41.
10. *ibid.*
11. *ibid.*, p. 42.
12. He gives the reading *taddamgaṇanāthalla Saiva araṇ mahōdayamon; ibid.*, p. 42.
13. British Museum Oriental Manuscripts: 6616. This was published in 1972 by the present author. S. Pathmanathan, *Tamiḻccāsanankaḷum īḻa vara lārru ārāyacciyum* (Tamil Epigraphy and studies on Ceylon History) *Iḷaṅkeṉrai* (Colombo, 1972), p. 24.

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The text as found in the manuscript mostly conforms to the original and if it is the product of the decipherment of the stone inscription it represents a most successful attempt at decipherment of the epigraph. But, unfortunately there is no means of knowing when and by whom this inscription was originally deciphered. It could be surmised that some learned Brahmin attached to the shrine deciphered the inscription at a time when the engraved stone was in a better state of preservation. It is even probable that this manuscript reproduces a copy of the text either engraved on copper plate or written on palm-leaf. The expression *kallilum cempilum eḻuttikkōṭuttom* as found in some inscriptions in India and Ceylon testify that sometimes inscriptions were issued in two copies—one engraved in copper and the other in stone.[14] A few copies of inscriptions in palm leaf also have been brought to light in Ceylon.[15]

Parakramabahu: Titles, epithets and religious policy

As Parākramabāhu is said to have been residing at Jayavardhanapura by which name Kotte was known in medieval times, he was undoubtedly a ruler of Kotte. Among the kings of Kotte there were four rulers who had the name Parākramabāhu: Parākramabāhu VI (1412-1467), Parākramabāhu VII (1477-1485), Parākramabāhu VIII (1485-1505) and Parākramabāhu IX (1506-1520).[16] As the inscription is dated in the 38th regnal year the ruler mentioned in it is evidently Parākramabāhu VI because none among the other rulers mentioned earlier had a reign of more than twenty years duration. There is some confusion about the date of Parākramabāhu's accession in the sources that relate to his reign. According to some of them he ascended the throne around A.D. 1412 while others reckon the year A.D. 1415 as the year of his accession.[17] The 38th year in which the grant was made would correspond to either A.D. 1450 or A.D. 1453.

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14. This expression is found in the slab inscription of the Veḷaikkāras at Polonnaruwa and the Laṅkātilaka inscription. See *SII*, IV : 1396; *UCR, XVIII*, Nos. 1 & 2, January, 1960, pp. 16-23.

15. The texts of the Niyamgampaya and Madawela inscriptions are among those that are known only from palm-leaf manuscript copies.

16. *EZ*, III, p. 40.

17. According to the Sinhalese chronicle, the *Rājāvaliya*, Parākramabāhu VI had a reign of 52 years. The contemporary sources, however, are not agreed on the date of his accession. According to the evidence from some of them he ascended the throne in 1412 while others make 1415 the year of his accession. This contradiction could be reconciled if we assume that he came to power in 1412 but underwent the ceremony of consecration in 1415 after shifting to Kotte from Rayigama. See *University of Ceylon: History of Ceylon* (UCHC) Vol. I, pt. ii, ed. H. C. Ray and others [Colombo, 1960], p. 669.

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Sankabodhi-varmar: The king according to the inscription, had the title *caṅkabodhi-paṉmar, Rūjūdhirūja* and the epithets *Tiribhuvaṉaccakkaravarlti* and *Pararājasēkharabhujaṅga.* The expression *caṅkabōdhivaṉmar* is the Tamilised form of Sanghabodhivarmaṉ—a compound of the words *Sanghabōdhi* and *varman. Sanghabodhi* (s. Sangabo) was one of the two alternate titles assumed by the kings of Ceylon on their consecration, the other being *Abhayasalāmēgha*[18]. Both titles are mentioned in Sinhalese and Tamil inscriptions. The title *sanghabodhi* occurs in varying forms in the Tamil inscriptions set up in Ceylon from the ninth century onwards. This title is of some significance as it implies a reciprocal connexion between kingship and Buddhism. It may be regarded as the Ceylonese (Buddhist) counterpart of such titles as *Paramabhāgavata, Paramamāhēśvara,* and *Paramabrāhamaṇya* borne by some of the Hindu rulers of medieval India.[19]

In the Tamil inscriptions issued in Ceylon the honorific particle varmar(n) is mostly suffixed to the title *Caṅkapōti* as a result of South Indian influence. Varman derived from *Varmma* meaning armour or coat of mail is suffixed to the names of several kings perhaps to indicate their kṣatriya origin.[20] All the rulers of certain dynasties had names ending in varman. The rulers of Kāmarūpa, the Sālaṅkāyanas, the Vishṇukuṇḍins, the Pallavas of kāñci, the Maukharis of Kanauj, the Khmer rulers of Cambodia and the Hindu kings of Champā are the most notable among such dynasties.[21] In the genealogy of Ceylonese kings only two rulers of the Anurādhapura period—Mānavamma (Mānavarman) and Sēnāvarman are known to have had personal names ending in Varman. This was undoubtedly a result of Pallava influence. Mānavamma had lived at the Pallava court and subsequently secured royal power in Ceylon with the aid of an army supplied by Narasimhavarman. In the case of Sena (IV or V) only a Tamil inscription refers to him as Sēnāvarmaṉ.[22]

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18. Two Tamil inscriptions of the Anurādhapura period mention the title *Caṅkapoḷivaṉmar.* Vijayabāhu I (1070–1110) and Nissankamalla (1188–1197) are said in Tamil inscriptions to have borne this title. Two Tamil epigraphs from Tirukkovil also mention a ruler called Vijayabāhu who had this title. *SSI,* IV, 1396, 1404, 1405; S. Paranavitana, 'A Tamil Inscription from Palamottai', *EZ,* IV; no. 23, p. 191; *CTI,* pt. I, pp. 4, 6.

19. In some of their records the Gupta Emperors are given the titles *paramadaivata* and paramesvara. The Pāṇḍuvamsis of Baghelkhand had the epithets *Parama-mahesvara* and *Parama-brāhmaṇya,* see *The History and Culture of the Indian People,* Vol. III—*The Classical Age,* ed. R. C. Majumdar [Second Impression, Bombay, 1962], pp. 31, 349.

20. *Madras Tamil Lexicon,* VI, p. 3506; Jibananda Vidyasagara, *Shabda Sagara* [Culcutta, 1900], p. 634.

21. *The History and Culture of the Indian People,* Vol. III—*The Classical Age,* pp. 67, 68, 70, 80, 282, 283, 204, 206, 643, 646.

22. *SII:* 1403, 1404.

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In South India the word *varman* was suffixed to the alternate titles assumed by the Pāṇḍya and Cōḷa rulers on their accession to the throne. The Pāṇḍyas had the alternate titles *Māravarman* and *Jaṭāvarman* while the Cōḷas had the titles *Rājakēsarivarman* and *Parakēsarivarman*. As *varman* was suffixed to the alternate consecration names of the Sinhalese rulers only from the 11th century onwards it may be assumed that it was the result of Cōḷa influence. In this connextion it may be mentioned that the Cōḷa prince who was consecrated as the king of Ceylon had the title *Caṅkavaṉmar* which is an abbreviation of *Caṅkapōtivaṉmar*.[23]

Rājādhirāja: The title Rājādhirāja which signified imperial power and status was widely used in India and in the other countries of Asia which came under the influence of Indian culture from the time of the Husāṇas onwards. However, in course of time it lost its original significance. Rājādhirāja also was the personal name of two Cōḷa kings who ruled in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In Ceylon this title came into vogue during the fifteenth century and is mentioned in the records of the kings of Kotte and Kandy.[24] The assumption of the title *Rājādhirāja* by Parakramabahu VI may have been inspired by the partial revival of the power and glory of the Sinhalese monarchy after a long period of decline covering a period of nearly three centuries. He brought the 'whole island under one umbrella' during his long and eventful reign and this was a remarkable achievement. Nevertheless, his unification of the island was only nominal; it did not lead to the administrative integration of all the kingdoms and principalities in the country. To his subjects, Parakramabāhu's use of the title *Rājā dhirāja* may have implied his overlordship over the whole island. The Oruvala *sannasa* also refers to Parakramabāhu VI as Rājādhirāja. The epithet *Māhārājādhirāja* also came into vogue during the Kotte period. It had become a conventional epithet and had no special significance.

Tiribhuvanaccakkaravartti: The epithet *Tiripuvaṉaccakkaravartti* meaning 'the emperor of the three worlds' was assumed by the Sinhalese rulers in imitation of the practices of the Tamil monarchies of South India. In the Cōḷa kingdom the epithets *Cakkaravartti* and *Tiripuvaṉaccakkaravartti* were widely used in connexion with royalty only after the accession of the Cōḷa-Cāḷukya prince, Kulōttunga I (1070-1122).[25] The second of these epithets was assumed by Kulōttunga I and all his successors and in this respect the Cōḷa practice was soon adopted by the Pāṇḍyas.

23. S. Pathmanathan, 'Cōḷa Rule in Ceylon, 993–1070: Administrative Organization'. Paper presented at the 4th Conference Seminar, International Association of Tamil Research, Jaffna, 1974.
24. *EZ*, Vol. III, no. 3; *EZ*, Vol. IV, no. 3, p. 24.
25. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas* [Second edition, University of Madras, 1955], pp. 302, 330.

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Indian influences on kingship in Ceylon during the Polonnaruva period were mainly from two regions—the Tamil country and Kalinga. The term *cakravartti*, which was used as a royal epithet in both these regions, was used in official documents from the time of Jayabāhu during the early twelfth century.[26] Whether the epithet *Tiripuvaṇac-cakkaravartti* implied any notion of the Divinity of Kingship—the Devarāja cult of some of the oriental courts of the medieval age, is debatable. This epithet does not seem to have been assumed by any Sinhalese ruler during the Polonnaruva period despite the close political and dynastic connexions between Ceylon and South India.

The earliest reference to the epithet *Tiripuvaṇaccakkaravartti* is found in two Tamil inscriptions from Tirukkovil both of which are dated in the tenth year of a ruler named Vijayabāhu[27] who may be identified as the fifth ruler of that name. The assumption of this title by Parākramabāhu VI of Kotte may suggest that some hazy ideas about the Divinity of Kingship were sustained by his court. The reference to him as *Bōdhisattvāvatāra* (an incarnation of Bōdhisattva) in an inscription of one of his successors seems to lend some support to this view.[28]

Pararājasēkharabhujanga: The epithet *Pararājasēkharabhujanga* is of considerable historical interest as it signifies one of the major political achievements of Parākramabāhu. *Pararācacekaraṉ* was one of the alternate titles assumed by the rulers of Jaffna on their accession to the throne.[29] Parākramabāhu's epithet which may be rendered as 'serpent to Pararajasekhara' implies that he vanquished his contemporary ruler of Jaffna. The conquest of Jaffna by Sapumal, the general and adopted son of Parākramabāhu, is a favourite theme in contemporary Sinhalese literature, notably the *Kokila sandesaya*[30]. According to the latter, Arya Cakravartti, the king of Jaffna fled to India when he lost his kingdom. Our inscription provides some confirmation of the claims made in Sinhalese literature about Sapumal's conquest of Jaffna.

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26. In the Polonnaruwa slab inscription of the Vēḷaikkaras Vijayabāhu I is referred to with the epithet *cakkaravarttikal*.

27. In two inscriptions from Tirukkovil, which could be assigned to the Kotte period, a ruler called Vijayabāhu is described as Cankapotivanmar and Tiripuvanaccakkaravarti. *CTI*, Pt. I, pp. 4, 6.

28. *EZ*, Vol. III, no. 3.

29. S. Pathmanathan, 'The kingdom of Jaffna: Administrative organisation', paper presented at the 4th Conference Seminar on Tamil Studies, *IATR*, Jaffna, January 1974.

30. *Kokila Sandesaya*, ed. P. S. Perera [Colombo, 1906], v. 263; *UCHC*, Vol. I, pt. (ii), p. 671.

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Patronage of Hinduism: Hindu and Tamil influences were increasingly felt in Sinhalese society as a result of active social and cultural contacts between the Sinhalese kingdom and South India. Such influences were further strengthened by the arrival of a considerable number of Indian Brahmins, the activities of mercantile communities of Indian origin and the settlement of several such groups of Indians in the towns and the coastal regions. The court which inherited the legacies of the Malabar aristocracy of Gampola[31] was very receptive to the new influences. Some members of the royal family had even Tamil names. The daughter of Parākramabāhu VI had the name Ulakuḍayadevi.[32] Sapumal, the adopted son and general of Parākramabāhu VI, is known to have had the name Ceṇpakapperumāḷ.[33]

The royal documents of the Kotte period are reminiscent of South Indian influences. In drafting the texts of some of the Tamil inscriptions the court officials adhered to the Pāṇḍya practice with respect to the manner of recording the regnal years. The Naymmana inscription mentions the regnal year in the following manner: *yāṇḍu* 20 *āvaṭukku etirāvaṭu*, 'in the year opposite the 20th'.[34] Such manner of recording the regnal years, which is followed also in the Tamil inscription of Parakramabāhu VI from Jaffna,[35] is undoubtedly an imitation of the Pāṇḍya way of recording regnal years. The Sanskrit *sloka* that runs:

dāna pālanayōrmmadhyē dānāt srēyōnu pālanam 1
danāt svarggam avāpnōti palānād accutam padam 11 [36]

and which occurs in the concluding portion of many Vijayanagara inscriptions set up from the fourteenth century onwards is included in the Oruvala sannasa issued by one of the successors of Parākramabāhu VI.[37] It may be assumed that such South Indian influences on the epigraphy of Ceylon were in some measure due to the employment of South Indians as court officials in the Kotte period. Indeed, Tiruvaraṅgamperumāḷ, a Tamil officer of Indian extraction was in charge of royal documents in the reign of Bhuvanekabahu VII during the sixteenth century.[38]

31. The two most influential and powerful families in the Sinhalese kingdom during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were those of Alagakonāra and Senālankādhikāra both of which were of Malayāḷa extraction. Both families were *menavar* (Menons) *libid.*, pp. 640, 655.
32. *ibid.*, p. 767.
33. *ibid.*, p. 766.
34. *CTI*, pt. II, p. 57.
35. *ET*, p. 31.
36. The protection of a donation is more meritorious than making a donation. Through making donations one attains heaven but one who protects a donation attains the state of Vishṇu.
37. *EZ*, vol. III, p. 67.
38. P. E. Pieris, 'The Date of King Bhuvanēkabāhu VII', *JRASCB*, XXII No. 65–1912, pp. 272–273.

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Hindu influences permeated Sinhalese society at different levels and in greater measure than ever before during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Lankātilaka inscription of the time of Bhuvanekabāhu IV (1344–1354) testifies that the images of Brahma, Vishṇu, Mahēsvara, Ganapati, Skanda and other gods of the Hindu pantheon were installed at the lowest storey of the Laṅkātilaka temple erected by the chief minister Senālaṅkādhikāra.[39] The worship of the images of Hindu deities in a Buddhist shrine presupposes an atmosphere of harmony between the adherents of Hinduism and Buddhism. As a religion Buddhism did not demand from its adherents exclusive allegiance to and faith in the *triratna*. In popular estimation the worship of Hindu deities like Vishṇu and Skanda did not conflict with one's devotion to Buddhism. The cults of Skanda kumāra and Pattini seem to have become popular during this period and in some documents recording the transactions of kings it was felt necessary to invoke the names of Brahma, Vishṇu, Mahesvara, Skanda and Pattini along with the *triratna* perhaps on account of the popularity of their worship.[40]

Parākramabāhu VI and his successors supported Hinduism and Hindu institutions. Parākramabāhu had as *Purohitas* two Telugu Brahmins, Pōta ojjhalun and Avuhulu ojjhalun, who were rewarded for their services with a land grant by one of his successors.[41] Parakramabahu had set up an alms hall for the purpose of providing requisites for twelve Brahmins and made endowments for its maintenance. Moreover, he made a grant of land (*dānaksetra*) to 24 Brahmins most of whom were Tamils, the rest being Telugus.[42] Parākramabāhu VI is said to have constructed a three storyed Paṭṭini temple in Kotte.[43] His solicitude for Munnesvaram may be explained in the light of the religious conditions in the Sinhalese kingdom and his religious policy.

Munnesvaram: Tradition claims a hoary antiquity to Munnesvaram but its origins are obscure.[44] There are no reliable literary or epigraphic notices on this shrine before the Kotte period. It had, however, become famous in the reign of Parākramabāhu VI so as to attract the attention of the king. In the fifteenth century it appears

39. Mudaliyar B. Gunasekera, 'Three Sinhalese Inscriptions'—I. Lankatilaka inscription', *JCBRAS.* X (34)

40. H. W. Codrington, 'Gadaladeniya Slab Inscription', *EZ*, Vol. IV, no. 3, pp. 16–27.

41. *EZ*, III, no. 3, p. 51.

42. Kudumirissa Rock Inscription', *JCBRAS*, Vol. X, pp. 96-102.

43. *UCHC*, Vol. I, pt. II, p. 766.

44. The *Takṣiṇakailāsa Mahātmyam*, a work which appears to have been written in Ceylon and which could not be regarded as authentic by any means, incorporates most of the legends concerning Munnēsvaram. The legendary accounts incorporated in that work claim a pre-historic origin to this temple and even attribute its foundation to Rāma. See, P. Sivaramakrishna Sarma, Sri Munnesvara varalaru [Colombo, 1968], pp. 4–5.

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to have been one of the two principal Hindu shrines in the territories of Kotte, the other being the Vishnu temple at Devinuvara in the southern coast of the island. The division of Munnesvaram which is so named after the temple had come to be so called by the time of Parākramabāhu. The *kokila sandesaya* mentions of this locality.[45] It may, therefore, be inferred that the origins of the shrine go back to a period very much earlier than the reign of Parākramabāhu VI.

Its location in the neighbourhood of Chilaw may perhaps provide the clue for the explanation of its origins. Chilaw, one of the minor ports on the western littoral, became a centre of commercial importance in the medieval period, especially after the drift of Sinhalese political power to the southwest. By virtue of its geographical position it supported a population of seafarers, some of whom were engaged in chank and pearl fisheries. As a port town of some significance, it was also frequented by Indian traders operating from Malabar and the Coromandel. The temple of Munnesvaram must have developed for catering to the religious needs of the Tamil settlements in the neighbourhood.

Munnesvaram which is sometimes called Muṉṉīśvaram by the Hindus in modern times is however, referred to in the inscription as Moṉṉīśvaram. The contemporary Sinhalese text has the form Munnesarama. The use of the two variant forms of the name in two contemporary sources makes it difficult for one to decide which of the two forms is the earlier and the correct one. The form Moṉṉīśvaram is not altogether inexplicable and a clue for its explanation may be found in some of the expressions found in South Indian inscriptions.[46] Moṉṉaiappar and Moṉṉaippirān are names that occur in medieval South Indian inscriptions. The exact significance of the term Moṉṉai is not known. It could be surmised that it is a toponym. Moṉṉīśvarar could be a compound of the words moṉṉai and īśvarar. This expression may signify either a temple of Siva constructed by a dignitary who had the name beginning with the element moṉṉai or a temple situated at the locality of Moṉṉai. It is even probable that the name was introduced by settlers from South India who were familiar with such a name in their original homeland. Another explanation is that Moṉṉīśvaram is a corruption of the name Muṉṉīsvaram.[47] The name Muṉṉīśvaram could be explained as a combination of the words *muni* and *īsvaram* and would denote a temple of Siva, the foremost of sages.

45. *Kōkila sandesaya* ed. P. S. Perera [Colombo, 1906], v. 263; *UCHC*, Vol. I, pt. II, p. 671.

46. Annual Report on Epigraphy (ARE) Madras, No. 229 of 1916.

47. *CTI*, pt. I, p. 39.

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The temple of Munnēsvaram appears to have enjoyed royal patronage throughout the Kotte period. In the early years of the sixteenth century another ruler of Kotte, Parākramabāhu IX issued a copper plate recording a royal grant of extensive lands to the temple.[48] Munnēsvaram fell on evil days with the decline in the power and influence of the Sinhalese monarchy and the corresponding rise of Portuguese power in the kingdom of Kotte. The Portuguese soldiers under the command of Diogo de Mello had this temple razed to the ground when they ravaged the lands of Chilaw and Negombo in 1578.[49] Subsequently the sixty-two villages of Munnēsvarampattu which belonged to the temple were given over to the Jesuits who constructed the church of St. Paul in 1606 and began the propagation of the faith.[50] Chilaw was brought under Kandyan rule in the seventeenth century and in the subsequent century the Nāyakkar ruler, Kīrtti Sri Rājasinha (1747-1782) had the temple reconstructed by architects brought from India. The work is said to have been completed in 1753.

48. *Srī munnesvara varalāru*, p. 9.
49. *The Temporal and spritual conquest of Ceylon* by Fr. Fernao de Queyroz trans. S. G. Perera (Colombo, 1930), pp. 424–425.
50. P. E. Pieris, *Ceylon: The Portuguese Era*, Vol. II, p. 37.

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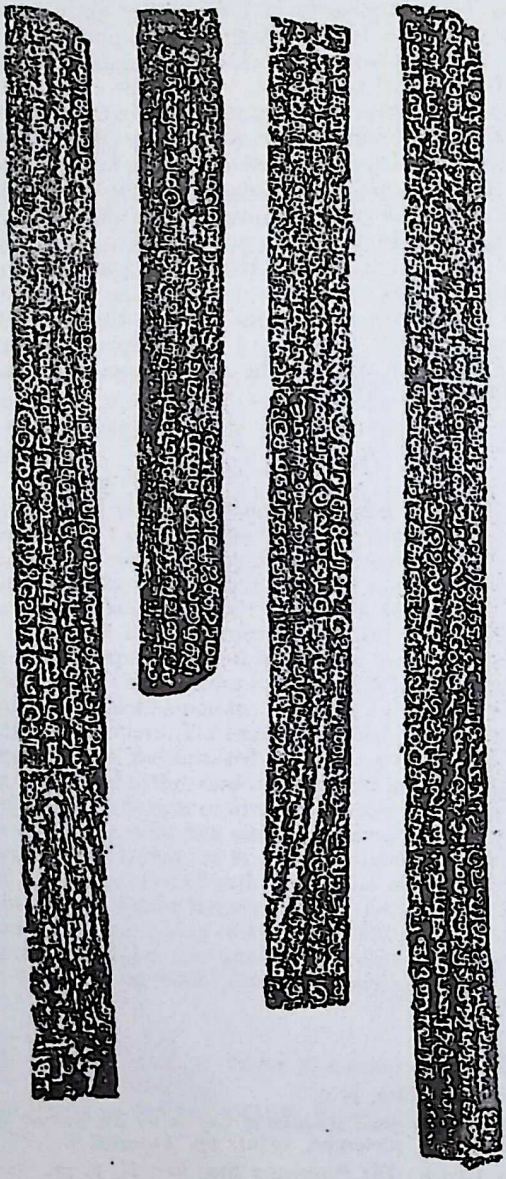

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Text

(மொண்ணீஸ்வரர் கோயிலிற் பதிவாகியிருக்கின்ற சமஸ்கிருதமுந் தமிழுங் கலப்பான சாசனத்தின் உண்மையான வாசகம்)

ஸ்வஸ்தி ஸ்ரீ ஸமந்த பத்ர சரணர விந்த
வந்தித நிநகரவம்ஸானபிஜாத ராஜாதிராஜ
பரராஜஸேகர ஸவஜங்க ஸ்ரீ சங்கபோதி
வத்மரான திரிபுவனச் சக்கரவர்த்தி ஸ்ரீ
பராக்கிரமபாகு தேவற்கு யாண்டு
38 ஆவது அற்பசி முன்பத்தாம் பக்கம்
மொண்ணீஸ்வரமுடைய தம்பிரானரை
பூஜிக்கிற நம்பிமாரை ஜயவர்த்தனக்
கோட்டைக்கு அழைத்து விஜயாமகவ
பண்டிதர் புரோகிதரிடம் தம்பிரானருடைய
க்ஷேத்திரங்களிற் செய்தி கேட்டு முன்பு
நம்பிமார்க்கு நின்ற மொண்ணீஸ்வரத்தில்
சீமைக்கு உள்பட்ட க்ஷேத்திரத்
தம்பிரானுற்குத் திருனமத்துக் காணியாக
கற்பித்து நம்பிமார்க்குப் பூஜைக்காணியாக
இலுப்பை தெனியில் வயல் அமணம்
இருபத்திரண்டும் கோட்டைப் பிட்டியில்
வயல் அமணம் முப்பதும் முதல்மைக்குக்
கற்பித்துத் தித்தக் கடையில் வயல் அமணம்
எட்டும் இதுக்குள்ள குடியிருப்புங் காடும்
ஆகவும் நியமித்து மொண்ணீஸ்வரத்தில்
நம்பிமாற்க்கு இருக்கக் கற்பித்து
மஹாஉள்ளதும் முன்னளியரிசியில் அமுது
கறியமுது இலையமுது சுகந்தம் முதலான
வையும் நம்பிமாற்கு மாதமொன்றுக்குப்
பணம் முப்பதும் முதல்மைக்குடைமைப் பணம்
மாசமொன்றுக்கு ஒவ்வொருத்தற்கு பதினென்றும்
இவர்களுக்குப் பாரம்பரியமாக சந்திராதித்ய
வரை சர்வமான்யமாக நடக்கும்படி
மொண்ணீஸ்வரமுடைய தம்பிரானர் ...
அபமதியவர்களுக்கு நியமித்த அளவுக்கு
மேல் ஒருவராலும் விக்வம் இன்றியே இருக்கச்
கற்பித்தருளின இந்தக் காணிக்கு அஹிதம்
செய்தவர்கள் பஞ்சமகா பாதகம்
செய்தவர்களாகவும். இதற்கு உறிதம்
செய்தவர்கள் சூர்யபதத்தைப் பெறக் கடவராகவும்.

தந்திதம் கண நாதஸ்ய
சைவ ஞான மகோததே
மொண்ணீஸ்வர பிரசாதேந:
சண்ட நாதஸ்ய சாசனம்.

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Transliteration Of The Text

Svasti Srī. Samantabhadra caraṇāravinda
vandita dinakara vaṁsābhijāta
Rājādhirāja Pararāja sēkhara bhujanga
Srī Sanghabōdhi vatmarāna
Tribhuvanaccakkaravartti Srī Parākrama
bāhu dēvaṟku yāṇṭu 38 āvatu
aṟpaci Muṇpattām pakkam
moṇṇīsvaramuṭaiya tampirānār ai
Pūjikkiṟa Nampināraī Jayavardhaṇak
Kōṭṭa:kku aḷaittu vija
sāmagava paṇṭitar Purōhita (rai)
Tampirānāruṭaiya kshēttiraṅkaḷiṟ
ceyti kēṭṭu muṟpu nampimārkku
niṟra moṇṇīsvarattil cīma'kku
uṭpaṭṭa kshētrat Tampiraṇāṟkku
tirunā:nattukkāṇiyāka kaṟpit
taruḷiṇa ma'kku pūja kkāṇiyāka
nampimārkku
iluppaiteṇiyil vayal amaṇam
irupattiraṇṭum kōṭṭaippiṭṭiyil vayal
amaṇam muppatum mutalmaikku
kaṟpittut tittakkaṭaiyil vayal
amaṇam eṭṭum itukkuḷḷa
kuṭiyiruppuṅ kāṭum ākavum niyamittu
moṇṇīsvarattil nampimārkku
irukkak kaṟpittu maṇai
uḷḷatum munnāḷi ariciyil amutu
kaṟiyamutu ilaiyamutu sugandha
mutalāṇavaiyum nampimāṟku māta
moṇṟukku paṇam muppatum
mutalmaikkutaima paṇam
māsamoṇṟukku ovvoruttaṟ
ku Patinoṇṟum ivarkaḷukku pārampariya
māka cand'āditya varai sarvamānyamāka
naṭakkumpaṭi Moṇṇīsvaramuṭaiya
tampirānār Avamatiyavarkaḷukku
niyamitta aḷavukku mēl oruvarālum
vignam iṇṟiye irukkak kaṟpit
taruliṇa intak kāṇ:kku ahitam
ceytavarkaḷ pañca mahā pātakam
ceytavarkalākavum, Itukku hitañ
ceytavarkaḷ sūrya patattaip
peṟakkaṭavārākavum

Tad'dam Gaṇa nāthasya
Saiva ñana mahō dadhē:
moṇṇīs'arap prasādēna
canḍa nāthsya śāsanam.

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Translation

Let there be happiness and prosperity:

The king of kings and 'Emperor of the three worlds', Sri Sanghabōdhi Parākramabāhu dēver of the solar dynasty who is (like) the serpent to (the king) Pararājasekhara(n) adores the lotus like feet of the Buddha. In the 10th day of the waxing moon of the month of arpaci (October–November) in the 38th year of his reign His majesty invited the chief priests who propitiate the God of munnēsvaram and inquired of the affairs of the temple from the (learned) Purōhita(r) called vijasāmagava paṇḍitar and endowed the lands in the temple district of munnēsvaram which formerly belonged to the priests as temple land. For the performance of worship, he granted to the priests, 22 *amaṇam* of field at Illuppa(i) deṇi(ya) and to the chief priests, 30 *amaṇam* of field at kōṭṭaippiṭṭi and 8 *amaṇam* of field at Tittakkaṭai with the inhabited localities and forests attached to them. (Moreover), he provided for the (daily) offering of three measures of cooked rice, curry, betel and incense and a monthly grant of 30 *paṇam* to the chief priests and 11 *paṇam* for each of the priests to be enjoyed in perpetuity (till the sun and the moon endure) and from generation to generation as a gift free of all taxes. Those who cause any obstruction to this grant will incur the sin of committing the five most heinous crimes while those who support it will attain the position of the sun.

This proclamation has been issued by Parākrama (bāhu) through the grace of the lord of Munnesvaram, the lord of all beings and the ocean of the knowledge of saivism.

அட்டவணை

நன்மை பொருந்திய புத்தருடைய பாதத்திலுண்டான வராயும் இராசாதிராசனுயும் அன்னியராஜாக்களுக்கு நாயகரா கியும் சிறிசங்கபோதி என்ற நாமதேயத்தையுடைய வராகிய ஸ்ரீ பராக்கிரமபாகு இராசனுடைய 38 ஆவது ஆண்டு ஐப்பசி பூருவ பக்கம் 10ம் திகதி முன்னீஸ்வரமுடைய தம்பிரானுரைப் பூசிக்கப்பட்ட குருக்கள்மாரை ஜயவர்த்தன கோட்டைக்கு அழைத்து .... முன்னீஸ்வரனுருடைய தலத்தின் செய்தி கேட்டு முன்பு குருக்கள்மாருக்கு நின்ற முன்னீஸ்வரத்தின் எல்லைக்குட் பட்ட தம்பிரானுருக்குத் திருநாமத்துக் காணியாகவும் இலுப்பத் தெனியில் அவணம் 22 கோட்டைப் புட்டியில் அவணம் 30 முதன்மைக்குக் கற்பித்து தித்தக்கடையில் அவணம் 8 இதுக் குள்ள குடியிருப்புங் காடும் ஆகவும் முன்னேஸ்வரத்தில் குருக்கள் மாருக்குக் கற்பித்த மனையுள்ளதும் முன்னுழி அரசியல் அமுது கறியமுது இலையமுது சுகந்தம் முதலானவையும் குருக்கள்

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மாருக்கு மாதமொன்றுக்குப்பணம் முப்பதும் முதன்மைக்கு உடமைப்பணம் மாசமொன்றுக் கொவ்வொருவருக்குப் பதினொன்றும் இவர்களுக்குப் பாரம்பரியமாக சந்திராதித்யர் வரைக்கும் சருவமான்யமாக நடக்கும்படி முன்னீஸ்வரமுடைய தம்பிரானர் . . . அபமதி . . . மேலேயொருவராலும் விக்கின மின்றியே இருக்கக் கற்பித்தருளின இந்தக்காணிக்கு தீமை செய்தவர்கள் பஞ்சமாபாதங்களைச் செய்தவராயும் நன்மை செய்தவர்கள் சூரிய பதவியைப் பெறக் கடவராகவும்.

இப்படிக்கு தேவகணங்களுக்கெல்லாம் நாதனுயிருக்கப் பட்ட, சிவஞான சமுத்திரரான மொண்ணீஸ்வரருடைய கிருபையினுல் பராக்கிரமனுற் பதிதற் பண்ணப்பட்டன.

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